

WHERE DO YOU PUT THE BOMB?

GORDON MURRAY

ABSTRACT

This essay accompanies two audio pieces which the reader can access via embedded web-links. It is an analytical reflection on the FALLOUT project in which descendants of Nuclear Test Veterans were interviewed with an intention of creating a piece of verbatim theatre. The project however mutated into the creation of a series of audio portraits which mixed the recorded testimonies of the descendants with interviews with experts from other disciplines and dramatic fictional scenes, tying them together with narrative poetry. The first part of the essay describes the creation of the pieces and the decisions behind the form and content. In doing so it discusses notions of authenticity, audience, and reach in relation to verbatim theatre. To aid this articulation the essay suggests that audiences might be categorised in three ways, a tourist audience, an audience of theatre goers, and an invested audience.

The attempt to reflect on the mutation from story to portrait draws heavily on the work of anthropologist Joseph Masco. Part 2 is an analysis of the two audio pieces with reference to Masco's concept of the nuclear uncanny. Masco's work on the individual, local and national psyche in America following the Manhattan project borrows from Sigmund Freud's famous notion of The Uncanny, in which contradictions between the strange and the familiar are embraced to create an anxiety which changes an individual's relationship with their surroundings.

INTRODUCTION

Nuclear exposure brings with it real, imagined and potential change. Mutations, metamorphoses and translocations are the parlance of the effects of exposure. Often the changes and the causes of them only become apparent later with time and distance. This phenomenon is also true of the creative process. Perhaps that is why when the creative process is applied or exposed to radiation (and vice versa), twisted and thwarted growth inhabits the very nature of the project and the outcome cannot be predicted but will be a cancerous deviation from what was expected.

I began by trying to make theatre and ended up with a form that wasn't quite theatre. I thought we would tell stories about people *being* but ended up with portraits of people *becoming*. If you expose the creative process to radiation what can you expect to produce but a mutated hybrid of forms?

I'd invite you to see what follows as an 'interrupted essay'. It comes in two parts with an active intermission. There is a written piece, then two audio pieces to listen to and then another written piece.

In the first section I discuss theatre and audiences, in particular a genre called *verbatim theatre*. In verbatim theatre people are interviewed, their testimonies are recorded and then recited by actors 'word for word'. It is often said to bring a sense of authenticity to the drama, Hammond and Steward for example employ the term "veracity" and compare the process to journalism (10). This publication is about nuclear issues, not theatre so it may not appeal to you but the intention is to explain how I arrived at a new and strange form that had mutated out of verbatim theatre.

Then you are invited to listen to two pieces, SHELLY GRIGG and STEVE CLIFFORD. The final section is a reflection on the pieces that you have listened to.

PART 1

Who hears the story? Three types of audience for personal testimony.

It is a rough, imprecise and messy cut that tries to divide and subdivide audiences into different categories. Such imprecision notwithstanding, I suggest that there are three types of audience for verbatim testimony: the *tourists*, the *theatre goers*, and the *invested*. I will attempt to draw out the difference between the three using examples below.

An audience of *Tourists*

A visit to the [Red Cross Museum](#) in Geneva will bring you face to face with a number of life-size holograms of individuals who have their hand held in the air seemingly in greeting or friendly salute. Touch the hand and that digital individual will share with you their testimony, their experience and their life-story. Collectively this [Chamber of Witnesses](#) serves as a guide through the museum's permanent collection *The Humanitarian Adventure*, which "offers you a unique opportunity to enter into the history of humanitarian action, breaking away from traditional museography" (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum). The power of the experience however remains in the story told rather than the technology employed to relate it.

A curated exhibition such as this relies on an audience which we may for the purposes of making a distinction call *tourists*. Their reason for visiting the museum may be manifold and we don't need to assume that they have travelled to Geneva, I simply mean that they visit the museum to engage in a curated experience which happens in this instance to involve personal testimony. They will also visit other collections or museums which do not. Verbatim testimonies are not their major concern, nor is theatre; they do not necessarily go with any pre-investment in the content or the issues.

An audience of *Theatre Goers*

A recent theatrical hit was a play called [London Road](#). It centred on the effects of a series of murders in Suffolk UK in 2006-2008. Produced at the National Theatre in London, it won awards, was revived and has been made into a film. We could safely say that this was a

mainstream production; it was also a piece of verbatim theatre. People from the area (living on London Road) were interviewed by the playwright Alecky Blythe who then edited and structured those interviews. They were then recited (in sung form) by actors (London Road 2011).

Mainstream verbatim theatre such as this relies on an audience of *theatre goers*. Again the distinction is not watertight but it can serve to make the point. We are talking here about people who go to the theatre for a theatrical experience. The form and content of that experience may change from visit to visit. In the case of this play the form and content is the delivery of personal testimony about living on London Road; on another night in another theatre the audience will experience something else. The audiences at the National Theatre had not gone to see verbatim theatre they had gone to see a play. They had no personal relationship with London Road in Suffolk or the events that had happened there. They were simply *theatre goers*.

An *Invested* audience

The community drama model relies on an audience who by locality or an interest in the issues may be called *invested*. A play that is moulded out of the testimonies of children in care, for example may be of specific interest and even created for an audience of local social workers, teachers, or care home managers. It is in this sense that the audience is *invested*. It has an interest and a stake in the content even without the theatricality through which the content will be mediated. Again we can be aware that all stories and hence all theatre can be both parochial and universal at the same time, and so these three distinctions are never rigid. We can assume for example that some people from London Road in Suffolk went to see the play *London Road* at the National Theatre. These people would be invested in the issue of the play as though it were a piece of community drama even though they were seeing a mainstream piece of theatre.

Verbatim theatre, in a community or applied drama context that binds itself to that aesthetic does have a claim on authenticity. That sense of investment that a community theatre audience brings with it can short circuit the mediated route between the reality and the theatrical experience. The audience member says, "I know that street being described, I recognise the situation that child describes, I have the same problem that person has." There is a cost however to the reach in terms of audience numbers. On the whole audiences for community drama performances are small.

Which audience hears your story?

If, like the British Nuclear Testing Veterans Association, you have a cause or a campaign, then you want to make your story heard by as many people as possible. Authenticity's gain is a campaigner's loss. Campaigns need reach, need audience numbers, or at least need an audience that has agency or power over policy. Of course the verbatim theatre form has transcended beyond the community theatre model and is now a fairly common feature of mainstream theatre with its bigger audiences. To reach the mainstream however it needs to leave the community theatre aesthetic behind and utilise through theatricality what we

may call a 'facsimile' of authenticity through other means. Alecky Blythe's verbatim piece *London Road* is a good example, with verbatim testimony listened to through earphones by the performers and simultaneously turned into song. Bib Taylor suggests that in this example the actor's voice "both claims and defers authenticity and authority, inasmuch as voice signifies presence and embodied identity, but the reworking of speech into sung tunes signals the absence of the real" (379).

Put simply the tools of theatricality can remind us that there is an authentic voice somewhere even though it is far removed from its context. Paradoxically it is the context that makes it authentic. Authenticity suggested and denied in the same moment.

The question is then, is it possible to find a form which can reach larger number of audiences than the typical community drama model and yet keep the authenticity of the original testimony? Could I as a theatre maker and documenter reach an audience of *tourists* (who want an exhibition of some sort), of *theatre goers* (who want drama) and an *invested* audience (who want to hear their own concerns being discussed)?

The FALLOUT Project

The project was assisted by the [British Nuclear Veterans Association](#) (BNTVA), a campaigning organisation made up of veterans who worked on the Australian nuclear test sites who want to reach the largest number of people. They wanted the project to help them to tell the authentic stories of the people affected by the nuclear tests in Australia. The descendants of the veterans have united under the umbrella of different organisation called [Fallout](#).

The FALLOUT project became a merging of the three models described above as verbatim theatre mutated into a different form that might find a way of reaching wider audiences but remain true to the original notion of using personal testimony to advance awareness as part of a campaign. In this case the awareness of the damage that the nuclear tests still inflict on the test veterans and their descendants.

The BNTVA's main resource is their website. They also are beginning to create education packs to use in schools, and are looking to create a virtual museum at various memorials in which you can scan a barcode with your phone and be guided to a number of resources about the nuclear test and the veterans' experiences before and after. At the same time *Nuclear Futures*, an Australian community arts program linking artists with atomic survivors, was creating a traveling exhibition titled [Nuclear](#) (Brown and Azer 2016) which would tour Australia (and later possibly the UK). The intention to create verbatim theatre as live performance began to morph as I searched for something that could be used to reach these audiences. I began to consider creating an audio play in MP3 format, a verbatim play about veteran's experiences. Those scanning a barcode at a memorial site could hear it, children studying the veteran's stories at school could hear it, and veterans and their descendants could hear it through the BNTVA website. Visitors to *Nuclear* could sit by a laptop and plug in headphones and hear it. Perhaps we could reach a bigger audience whilst maintaining the authentic testimonies of the veterans.

Whose story to tell?

The story of a nuclear test veteran would seem on the surface at least to be prime material for theatricalisation, the bomb blast being, if nothing else, a spectacular crescendo. In an earlier project, a verbatim play titled *Half a Life*, I had collaborated with *Nuclear Futures* producer Paul Brown and London based Backbone Theatre to stage a full length performance of eye witness testimony to events at Maralinga, the key site of British nuclear testing in South Australia (Brown "Maralinga: theatre from a place of war" 205-226). The experience of *Half a Life* however had left a residual question hanging over us. At what point does a story become a nuclear story?

Stories demand change. People and the world they inhabit must be notably different at the end of the story to the way they were at the beginning. Stories portrayed as drama tend to follow what we may call an Aristotelian arc. It is the general structure of the standard Hollywood blockbuster. We can input our own example but the structure should be recognisable: a shift from the usual rhythm of life, a set of problems and obstacles to be overcome, a growing realisation of narratives that lie behind the situation the protagonist is in, a climax to the action and then a brief time to reflect and be sadder but wiser before the credits roll. Easy then to place *the bomb* into this structure: our hero, newly conscripted is flown off to a tropical island, he begins to realise that far from being routine the job he is involved in is dangerous, secret and full of terrifying implications. The pace quickens as we lead up toBoom! Some moment of calm to tie up the narrative ends and send our hero back to the patterns of life that he left, similar in many ways but fundamentally changed.

It is a tempting story to tell but in truth the veteran's story does not quite fit the structural template that Aristotle laid out. For most of the veterans the bomb blast came early in their lives, it does not punctuate the narrative in the way that drama demands. A nuclear test veteran's legacy of ill health and uncertainty is a story in which the bomb blast comes towards the start not the end. Stories such as these are not the domain of Hollywood. They are difficult to structure, lacking a sense of resolution. No climax, just a pedestrian decline.

The initial idea of making a piece of authentic live verbatim theatre had mutated into an intention to create an audio piece and yet still something exciting, something Aristotelian. Initial conversations with veterans in 2014 at the BNTVA conference (BNTVA 2014) however brought a new sense of disquiet about the form as that residual question hung over us. At what point does a story become a nuclear story? The thing we were creating began to mutate again!

Many veterans have been kind enough to share their stories and their anecdotes with me but I've often found myself editing the story I hear even at the moment I'm being told it. "How does this fit the Aristotelian Arc"? I ask myself. "Where do I put the bomb"? Everybody who has been on a journey has a story to tell and I listened to (often fascinating) accounts of bulldozers coming loose in a storm on a ship just out of Portsmouth, or

orphaned birds being rescued and nurtured by a ship's crew, but just as often wondered silently to myself, "Is this a nuclear story and if so where do we put the bomb"?

At what point does a story become a nuclear story? When the conscripted soldier learns what the assignment is? After the first bomb blast? Back at home with the first indication of a complicated pregnancy or sickly child? Perhaps another way to pose the question is to ask at what point in a person's history did the nuclear blast they were exposed to make a distinct change to their life and the way they perceive the world around them, the sort of change not experienced by other serving military personnel.

At that same conference another group were convening. A small group consisting of adult children (descendants) of Nuclear Test Veterans, who had come together through a Facebook page called *Fallout*, in which they had found a virtual space to share experiences and offer communal support. As I listened to their testimonies it occurred to me that I wasn't editing out or sifting the content of what I heard even as I was hearing it in the way that I did with the veterans. None of these people had witnessed a nuclear explosion and yet all of their stories were nuclear stories. Stories about the health of their parents, stories about concerns over their children, stories about battles with the welfare payments, everything was brought back in their imagination at least to the bomb blasts that their fathers had witnessed. In their perception nothing of their lives was distinct from or excluded from the nuclear story that began with their father. The feeling among descendants was the bomb blasts had caused a change and every event in their lives was a consequence. Stories demand change and so I decided that the focus of the project would centre not on the veterans but on their descendants. The form and content began to morph again. Not one audio play utilising verbatim testimony but many and not stories of veterans but of their children.

Stories or portraits?

But what if the change is imperceptible? For most descendants their nuclear story began before they were born. That there is a causal link between the exposure that their fathers endured and their own physical health is contentious to say the least. In the UK the Ministry of Defence has refused to accept such a link (or even a link to any ill health of the original veterans). This led to the failure of a compensation claim against the Ministry in 2012 (Ministry of Defence 2012). And so some descendants inhabit a vague and somewhat intangible relationship with their own bodies, a feeling that some unspecific chromosomal aberration has created health problems that endure. For most, the science that may shine a light on the reality of this chromosomal transformation is not accessible and so the feeling that 'things just aren't quite right' becomes an embodied state of being. They embody what the anthropologist Joseph Masco has described as the "nuclear uncanny" (28). For a theatre maker it is difficult to build stories around changes which are imperceptible.

If stories demand change, portraits demand the opposite, the capture of a frozen moment. A portrait can contain within it a suggestion of the past, the moment before the capture as well of the potential of the future, the moment after, but the essence of the portrait is the moment itself, captured and frozen. The challenge then was to find a form that created a

portrait of some of these individuals and yet to tell the story which was contained within them, the story in which the bomb was not a punctuating moment, not part of a narrative arc but was carried with them all of the time and in which the effects of the blast lived every moment in the uncanny hinterland between sensation and imagination.

The final form

I decided then to create a series of short audio pieces, each concentrating on individual descendants that investigated and described the way that the bomb blasts that their fathers had experienced had been subsumed and embodied in their own lives. Each piece would use recorded interviews (either in their original form or through verbatim representations by actors) with fictionalised moments; and all the narratives would be tied together with a rhythmic narrative poem. These pieces could stand alone as audio portraits to be listened to through broadcast, or through being located on suitable websites, or they could tour with exhibitions, and they could be emailed backwards and forward amongst interested or invested listeners. The result being that they would have the 'reach' that is unachievable within a live community drama context but still having the authenticity that would come from hearing the testimony of the descendant albeit fictionalised and dramatised. They would be audio portraits contained inside MP3 files, to be used in exhibitions, campaign websites, and school education packs; and testimony theatricalised to reach *tourist*, *theatre goer*, and *invested* audiences.

You can listen now to the two pieces that have been completed. They began as conventional verbatim theatre but have mutated and changed into a different form. That's what exposure to radiation does!

Listen to [SHELLY GRIGG](#)

Listen to [STEVE CLIFFORD](#)

PART 2

FALLOUT: STEVE CLIFFORD and SHELLY GRIGG

Most of the descendants I have interviewed have health problems, many of which have been present from birth. In some cases these were manifested in very apparent physical deformities, and so the interviews were the stories of lives littered with countless hospital visits and radical interventionary surgery. Some have conditions which were less outwardly apparent but still serious, skeletomuscular problems for example such as fibromyalgia. These interviews were the stories of frustration of unrecognised conditions or unrecognised pain. Some have suffered from childhood leukaemia. Many of the women have had multiple miscarriages. There is a very rare and painful condition called Dercum's Disease (Adiposis Dolorosa) which seems to affect a statistically high number of the descendants (Grigg 2015).

One descendant commenting on her most recent trip to hospital to have her bent and buckled legs smashed and broken with the intention of making them straighter, answered

my sympathetic comments with a memorable but understated response. Casually she replied, “it is the curse of being a nuclear child” (Descendant 2016).

This off-the-cuff phrase is worth some analysis. It is the *curse* of a being a *nuclear child* (my italics). The *curse* serves both as a noun and a verb, an action done to a person, and a condition one must carry. Certainly there is a biblical connotation, the Old Testament books of *Exodus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy* all make reference to the ‘iniquities’ of the fathers being visited upon the children (King James Version). Just as interesting though is the concept of being a *nuclear child*. This is something different from describing oneself as a descendant (the most common parlance amongst those I interviewed). To describe oneself as a *nuclear child* suggests a total embodiment – conceptually and actually – of nuclear energy. It is a suggestion that the biological tropes, the learned behavioural patterns or the chromosomal information, that passes on to a child from a father are, in this case passed on to the child from the nuclear explosion. The paternity is located in the x-rays, gamma-rays, protons and neutrons emitting from those explosions as much as in the germ cells of the natural father. The other intimation in naming oneself a *nuclear child* is that as well as being a child conceived *from* a nuclear force, the child *is* a nuclear force. He or she contains and emits, is toxic, is explosive, decays and transmutes. In this sense then it is true to say that all the stories told by the descendants are nuclear stories. It is also this curse of being a nuclear child that means many descendants are carrying with them a constant feeling that *things just aren’t quite right*.

This intangible condition which lies somewhere between science and magic became the focus of the audio pieces. Although I did not know it at the time, the condition is akin to what the anthropologist Joseph Masco has labelled ‘nuclear uncanny’ (28). My attempt hereon in is to use Masco’s concept to help analyse the process of making the audio pieces as well as the final products. Masco uses the term most prominently in his book *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (2006). With particular reference to New Mexico, Masco describes effect of Manhattan Project and the development of a nuclear weapon stockpile on the individual, local and national psyche.

Masco utilises Freud’s identification and articulation of das Unheimlich. At the heart of the uncanny as articulated by Freud lies the contradiction between the strange and the familiar contained within one place or object. This of course is a simplistic explanation for such a nuanced phenomenon. In the original German the fusing together of puns and double negatives within one word allows for layers of meaning twisted tightly together. For Masco the nuclear uncanny is expressed in one example as, “A perceptual space caught between apocalyptic expectation and sensory fulfilment” (27). My own observation whilst conducting interviews was less insightful and not as astutely recorded. I tended to come away simply with the sense that the descendants carry with them a feeling that *things just aren’t quite right*.

Masco posits that the nuclear uncanny comes partly as, and is only part of much wider results of ongoing hegemonic processes that makes consideration of the devastation possible through nuclear bombs “unthinkable”.

What kind of cultural work is performed in the act of making something “unthinkable”? ... For to make something “unthinkable” is to place it outside of language, to deny its comprehensibility and to elevate it into the realm of the sublime. (Masco 2)

Elsewhere he asks,

Finally if in fact people can be so anaesthetized by the possibility of extinction that it no longer seems to register, how do we now regain our senses in order even begin to answer such questions? (Masco 12)

Obviously Masco’s questions here are infused with immensity of size and scale. By cultural work he does not mean any particular instances of culture, but the whole network of interconnected cultural, linguistic and political relationships that go to creating societal imaginaries. Likewise language is not limited to that which is spoken or written but to the entirety of signifiers and cultural codes which go towards creating master narratives. The “sublime” that he alludes to falls most readily under Edmund Burke’s definition in which the sublime is analogous to terror (131), as well as Immanuel Kant’s who considers the sublime as being defined by unfathomable magnitude (101-130).

The FALLOUT project may be said to look at the possibility of using cultural activity to reverse that progression towards the *unthinkable* and bring effects of nuclear weapons back into the realm of the thinkable. It does so by reducing the scale. Not by concentrating on the apocalyptic devastation of the planet but on the slow pedestrian decline of the individual. If culture and language in their most general sense have created this state then perhaps it is possible for culture and language in their most narrow sense to find instances of reversing it.

The FALLOUT pieces utilise language and culture in its most simple and specific sense. Very simple narrative poetry fuses the content of the interviews and dramatic flashbacks. And yet the narrative poem does not serve to tell a story. Remember, these are portraits. The critic John Berger explains the function of poetry in this context best. In doing so he points towards tensions that Masco underlines throughout his study.

Poems, even when narrative, do not resemble stories. All stories are about battles, of one kind or another which end in victory and defeat. Everything moves towards the end, when the outcomes will be known.

Poems regardless of any outcome cross the battlefields, tending the wounded, listening to the wild monologues of the triumphant or the fearful. They bring a kind of peace. Not by anaesthesia or easy reassurance, but by the recognition and the promise that what has been experienced cannot disappear as if it had never been. (Berger 21)

The examples featured in this edition STEVE CLIFFORD and SHELLY GRIGG are portraits of descendants of Christmas Island test veterans. Both are unemployed as a result of disability and ill-health. Steve practices reiki healing as well as being a digital artist. Shelly gives most of her time to her activities with the previously mentioned Facebook Fallout group, which

she initiated. Like many of the descendants their ill-health makes them vulnerable to the fluidity of the benefit and welfare systems and by default leaves them in an almost constant state of poverty. They do seem to fall into a demographic that Masco alludes to which embraces the contradictions that wrap around those exposed in any way to the nuclear story.

The invention of the atomic bomb transformed everyday life, catching individuals within a new articulation of the global and the local and producing society imaginaries drawn taut by the contradictory impulses of the technologically celebratory and the nationally insurgent, as well as the communally marginalised and the individually abject. (Masco 1)

This is one of many times in which Masco uses the example of the bomb (in this case its invention) as a way of punctuating or drawing attention to a shift in time that is tethered to shifts in perception of reality that would otherwise be imperceptible. This idea of change which is imperceptible runs throughout the FALLOUT pieces, but the notion that change must be marked by some punctuating signifier is most apparent in SHELLY GRIGG.

SHELLY GRIGG

After serving on Christmas Island, and witnessing a number of atomic tests, Shelly's father Roy Grigg became a Franciscan friar and changed his name to Brother Paul. This piece mixes interviews with Shelly with interviews with a Franciscan Friar who had worked alongside Brother Paul. As a background we recreated his original funeral mass, including the Gospel readings, hymns, Eucharistic prayer, and eulogy that were given that day.

In this piece the sound of a bell is a central motif and replaces the bomb as a signifier of change. As the poem invites us to consider the concept of transubstantiation as a metaphor for the imperceptible change of chromosomal structure, and the story of the transfiguration of Christ as a metaphor for the sublime terror of the bomb blast, so the bell serves as a metaphor for the way that changes in time are punctuated. The sound of the bell echoes through the piece, announcing the funeral mass, sounding the all clear after the Grapple test on Christmas Island, or marking the moment of transubstantiation. In the Catholic or High Anglican mass, the Sanctus bell is rung to mark the moment that the bread or the wine is 'changed' to the flesh and blood of Christ. In this sense it has signifying function similar to that which Masco gives to the bomb.

*Bells are rung to mark a change
To punctuate a shift in time
When no outward sense of rearrangement
Exist we need the bells to chime
To remind us that change can occur
Beyond what the mind and body sense. (Murray, SG 14:14)*

The metaphorical function of the bomb to mark temporal changes is one that Masco returns to often, he tells us that "the detonation of the first atomic bomb marked the end of one

time and the apotheosis of another” (1). He goes on to make clear that one of the defining characteristics of that other time is the infusion of contradiction or polarisation of opposites that inhabit or feed the sense of nuclear uncanny.

In SHELLY GRIGG the bells rung to call out the funeral mass are the same bells that call the all clear in the nuclear test. They signal the beginning of Brother Paul’s life as well as the end of Roy Griggs. The bomb/bell symbolises two temporal possibilities, marking out the move to compassion that underlined Roy Griggs spiritual calling as well as the ‘thirst’ that was the beginning of his alcoholism.

*Two things were born in Shelly’s dad
In that exploding light cloud burst
Or two things left from what he had
The one compassion, the other thirst. (Murray SG 6:13)*

The contradictory nature of this nuclear uncanny lies behind the mirror imagery Masco uses elsewhere to illustrate the sense of tension between opposites. This is particularly apparent when drawing on some of most paranoid aspects of the national psyche when infected with the nuclear uncanny. The bizarre use of psychics by the CIA, for example, as a reaction to the Soviet interest in the paranormal is presented through imagery in which mirrors serve as windows into an uncanny other.

*For just as psychics purport to know the future and to make manifest their ideas
through mental prowess, so too did the apocalyptic mirror-imaging between national
security states enable Cold Warriors on each side to see their own worst fears
manifested in the other. (Masco 16).*

I’ve recognised something similar on an individual level in a number of descendants that I have spoken to. Among many there is a feeling that there is some sense of conspiracy at work and they are part of an experiment that was started and is still ongoing by the Ministry of Defence into the long (intergenerational) effects of nuclear exposure. Many believe that their medical records are tagged and that their fathers were guinea pigs to an experiment of which they themselves are part. At the same time the need to remain loyal to the armed forces and all that they represent through association with their fathers means that they need to hold two contradictory positions- loyalty and insurgency- at the same time.

This mirror imagery where oneself is seen in another is for Freud one of the manifestations of the uncanny found in the doppelganger. This sense of contradiction and mirroring is a constant motif in the FALLOUT pieces as it is in Masco’s work. In SHELLY GRIGG, the blurring of the boundaries between the different figures echo throughout. The piece invites us to make direct comparisons between Shelly, Roy Grigg, Brother Paul, St Francis and Christ. The eulogy likens Brother Paul to St Francis and then the poem picks up the theme and compares Shelly to her father the soldier and her father the friar in that she,

*Like Francis and her father/brother
Is caring in a different fashion. (Murray SG 3:12)*

It is a strange uncanny irony that the gospel reading on the day of Brother Paul's funeral was from Matthew and concerned the transfiguration of Christ. That day August 6th is Hiroshima Day, the anniversary of the dropping of the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. In this Gospel reading Christ takes some of his apostles to a mountain where he appears supernaturally radiant, and is seen talking to Moses and Elijah, prophets of the Old Testament. Then all are covered by a white cloud and hear God speak.

*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart
And (he) was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him....
While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"....
And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid... (King James Version 17:1-6)*

Even within the gospel reading this sense of mirroring and fusing of identities and the sensation of doppelganger seems to be echoed again. Inside the New Testament story the figure of Christ is mirrored with his Old Testament doppelgangers. Moses and Elijah in *Exodus* and *Kings* respectively, ventured up a mountain to encounter God in the form of a sublime cloud. The sublime apocalyptic terror that the story holds being so similar to the experience of the dead soldier/friar, whose funeral is being celebrated, reminds us of that biblical curse of being a nuclear child. Later in the piece, Shelly tells us,

I feel regret that I haven't had children. To be able to pass on all sorts to my children would have been fantastic, but I would have been passing on a poison of sorts as well, something that they would have been passing on to their children and their children.
(Murray SG 17:02)

Here the curse, the nuclear uncanny and the feeling that things aren't quite right, are intermingled in a lack of detail, "a poison of sorts". This intangible, non-specific, change is the theme taken up when the friar Brother Hugh tries to draw out the difference between the change in matter that happens in transubstantiation and the change in matter that happens in the DNA of an individual exposed to radiation. In both areas there is a sense of non-specific speculation.

Traditionally, transubstantiation is when the substance ceases to be bread and becomes somehow Jesus or flesh...

It's existential not physical, whereas on the other hand in the genes of people subjected to nuclear radiation if you had the right form of electron microscope you could eventually find something, you could find twisted DNA or something like that...

God is in the whole process somehow. Some change happens to the people who themselves break bread together. (Murray SG 13:04)

This vagueness that inhabits the space between cause and effect presents itself as faith and doubt at the same time. This is as true for the priest as for the nuclear child.

STEVE CLIFFORD

The doppelganger motif is equally as evident in STEVE CLIFFORD. The narrator claims to be a 'mirrors twin'. She is actually one of Steve's digital artworks a reworking of a photograph of a girl lying on a couch, reflected symmetrically and now almost unrecognisable, transformed as she is to a shining radiant being emanating light. This 'mirrors twin', displays the transformational possibilities of digital art and so is the perfect narrator to shine a light onto the imperceptible chromosomal changes that Steve feels have been at work in his body. Of herself she says,

*Digital art that seems to change
Its meaning and to rearrange (Murray SC 7:20)*

And later of Steve and his dad tells us

*And all the while genetic mutation
Yields chromosomal transformation
One DNA breaks out alone
To meet a different chromosome. (Murray SC 9:28)*

The uncanny twin or doppelganger runs through the poem in other ways. Steve's interviews are mixed with those of a radiation biologist and as Steve pontificates on the subsuming of spiritual energies in his reiki healing, the scientist explains how physical radiation is absorbed by the body. The fusion of the contradictory elements, the spirituality and the science, occurs when the structure of the piece seems to set them in harmony. When the scientist tells us that "the cells would have been passed onto their kids, the genetic make-up would be mutated" (5:30), Steve takes up the thread and seems to agree. "I'm just a conduit" he says. The reiki healer and the scientist though presented in opposition seem to fuse like the digital picture that voices the poem. Both muse on imperceptible change that leaves the uncanny feeling that 'things just aren't quite right'.

Masco states it thus,

Fear of radioactive contamination has also colonized psychic spaces and profoundly shaped individual perceptions of the everyday from the start of the nuclear age, leaving people to wonder if invisible, life threatening forces intrude upon daily life, bringing cancer, mutation, or death. The dislocation and anxiety produced by these moments of tense recognition is what I call the nuclear uncanny. (Masco 28)

This colonisation of 'psychic spaces' is key to STEVE CLIFFORD, these 'invisible life threatening forces' come in the way of chromosomal change that may or may not be at

work under the skin and in the germ cells passed on from father to son, the narrator tells us that,

*A chain reaction that commenced
When Steve's dad's sunburnt body tensed
As the countdown call begun
Goes on inside his second son. (Murray SC 10:22)*

And Steve takes up the thread to speculate not only on his childhood leukaemia but also his survival from it as well as his subsequent health problems and those of his sister. The sense of anxiety that Masco refers to is evident, as Steve says,

There was no doubt about it, I was going to snuff it in six months as a five-year-old or as a four-year-old kid – they knew that, that I was going to die; I had one transfusion and I started to come round – all that, you think, “It just doesn’t happen.” It just doesn’t happen. (Murray SC 11:16)

The third iteration of the mirror or the doppelganger in STEVE CLIFFORD is the bringing together of his own experience with his father's into one inseparable event. Steve relates a childhood anecdote, which seems to come straight from a supernatural thriller, infused with both the Freudian and nuclear uncanny. Whilst sitting in his bedroom at home, surrounded by toy aeroplanes Steve heard the noise of an aeroplane which shook the room and then heard a deep booming voice say “You are Blackbody”!

This is probably the most dramatic example of this colonisation of psychic space by the nuclear uncanny. This profound experience takes place in that most private of spaces, Steve's childhood bedroom. As he explains, he learns later that Blackbody is a term coined by the physicist Max Planck and results in Steve believing himself to be an absorber of radiation. Again the science is vague but it allows Steve to rationalise his position as a ‘nuclear child’ and the way his reiki healing gives him a kinship with his father, both vulnerable and both exposed to ‘strange’ energies’, “because I am an absorber of radiation, because I have been, or at one time I would have been when I was in the womb.” (Murray SC 16:12)

The narrative takes us from the safety that we assume to exist beneath the bed covers to the security of the womb, both penetrated by this eerie sound of an aircraft and this premonition or nuclear curse “You are blackbody”. Nothing can be more appropriate to exemplifying the uncanny; the compounding of a deep familiarity (bedroom, womb) with a feeling of threatening strangeness and unfamiliarity.

In STEVE CLIFFORD the sound of an aeroplane serves a similar but not identical function to that served by the bell in SHELLY GRIGG. Where the bell underlines moments of change the aeroplane fuses separate moments in time together. Masco makes clear that some part of the nuclear uncanny stems from the temporal distance between cause and effect.

Exposure to radiation affects the molecular structure of living cells, potentially leading to cancers while putting future generations at risk as well. If reproductive cells are irradiated, genetic damage can result, leading to the possibility of mutation, deformation or disease in developing embryos. This temporal ellipsis between radiation exposure and radiation effect is a specific aspect of the nuclear uncanny, one that can generate a proliferating psychic anxiety as potentially exposed individuals realize their inability to evaluate risk in everyday life. (Masco 32)

The motif of the aeroplane engine serves not so much to signpost moments of otherwise imperceptible change but to highlight this temporal ambiguity and draw together the past, present and future tenses so that moments of cause and effect become simultaneous. The first suggestion of the sound of the plane comes early in the piece when Steve's father on his way to Christmas Island talks about his interest in planes (an interest shared by his son). The suggestive sound effect becomes more ominous later as he speculates on being scared of the task he is deployed on. The thread is picked up again as the sound of the plane becomes less abstract as Steve's dad sees and hears the Canberra plane which will fly through the cloud after the explosion to "absorb the radiation". At this point we return to Steve relating his uncanny childhood anecdote. He tells us about his own experience of being surrounded by toy aeroplanes and hearing the sound of a plane approaching. In a strange (uncanny) twist he draws our attention to the sound of a plane coming over in real time (the time of the interview). This real sound caught on the interviewers tape gets fused together with the sound effects of the Canberra plane, the Valiant (which carries the bomb), and the phantom uncanny plane which is the centre of Steve's premonition.

Here the 'temporal ellipsis' that Masco describes is the moment of capture of the portrait. Steve's father crouching in the brace position on Christmas Island, Steve himself as a child crouching beneath a duvet and receiving a strange premonition, Steve being interviewed as a plane flies overhead and Steve foetal in the womb. The sound effect of the real, fictional and imagined planes all merge into the bomb blast not in this case to punctuate time but to fuse it.

Physical and psychic space are utterly penetrated and the testimony fuses with the drama and the poetry to give us simultaneous images of the baby in the womb, the child under the covers and the father in brace position. Three crouching foetal positions at three different times, drawn together in one uncanny moment. Steve's exposure to energies at Reiki healing is laid side by side with his father's exposure to the nuclear blast.

CONCLUSION

Where do you put the bomb?

I first came up with the title for this essay when I thought I was writing this piece primarily on narrative structure. I had not at that time come upon Masco's work and the concept of the nuclear uncanny. When I realised that the focus of this essay would shift to become an analysis of the content of the pieces as much as the form and structure I assumed that I

would alter the title accordingly. And yet the title seems to sit like a rock on top of a melting glacier. It remains whilst what lies beneath it melts away. The words beneath the title have shifted and transformed but the title seems to have stayed and settled; heavy and unmovable. Where do you put the bomb? On reflection it is perhaps the question all creative artists must ask first when dealing in this area. Perhaps the question is not limited to artists. It is asked with the same urgency by the military tactician, the American anthropologist, the British theatre maker, the campaigning veteran and the nuclear child.

There is of course no answer, the bomb exists outside of space and time in the uncanny place that marries the familiar to the strange. Exposure seems to demand that all questions fall back into themselves. I had framed the title question when I wondered when a story becomes a nuclear story. Now I find myself wondering when a story stops being one and yet the title question seems to stay the same. The curse of being a nuclear child is to have that question perpetually embodied and hence it is the curse of the nuclear uncanny. Steve Clifford places the bomb at the centre of his spiritual practice; he is the absorber of strange energies. Shelly Grigg places the bomb at the centre of her compassion and outreach; she monitors in her own body and the wider body of her community the imperceptible change that comes from exposure. Both continue an inheritance from their biological father and the nuclear blast. The creative act that attempts to represent this must accept its own exposure to forces that dissolve content, form and structure. Under such conditions we must accept that we do not put the bomb anywhere, the bomb places us. It places us in relation to itself and to each other and as artists or campaigners of any sort the best that we can hope for is that we can use our language to resist the forces that make it imperceptible and unthinkable. The artist offers what the bomb offers; Exposure.

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STEVE CLIFFORD

Gordon Murray	Writer
Paul Carter	Sound design
Chris Drohan	Composer
Narrator	Kristin Millward
Clifford	Ryan Hayes
Brian	Rupert Lazarus

Featuring interviews with Shelly Grigg and Ian Farlie.

SHELLY GRIGG

Gordon Murray	Writer
Chris Drohan	Sound Design and Composer
Narrator	Suzanna Hamilton
Priest	Alan David
Francis Dercum	Matt Gavan
Singer	Amanda Smallbone

Canticle arrangement Stephen Solloway

Featuring interviews with Shelly Grigg and Brother Hugh SSF.

Gordon Murray is a theatre practitioner and Senior Lecturer in Theatre based at Winchester University in the UK. He lives in London. He has worked as a theatre director, fashion show choreographer and venue manager. Across 2014-16 he collaborated within Alphaville's creative team for the Nuclear Futures Partnership Initiative.